

Message

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Sent: 8/29/2019 7:37:52 PM
To: [Ex. 6 Administrator Wheeler](#); Jackson, Ryan [jackson.ryan@epa.gov]; Idsal, Anne [idsal.anne@epa.gov]; Woods, Clint [woods.clint@epa.gov]
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Subject: 8.29.19 OOOOa Clips
Attachments: 8.29.19 OOOOa Clips.docx

Sir,

Please see clips from the OOOOa announcement today. We will update this as more stories publish.

8.29.19 OOOOa Clips

ABC News: Trump administration moves to roll back greenhouse gas rules on methane

The Trump administration announced its latest proposal to reverse [Obama-era regulations on greenhouse gases](#) on Thursday, the latest proposal targeting restrictions on the release of methane from oil and natural gas operations. The move is the most recent in a series of policies meant to reverse policies put in place under the Obama administration intended to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change.

Associated Press: US proposing easing rules on climate-changing oil emissions

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed revoking Obama-era regulations on climate-changing methane leaks from many oil facilities, a move that environmental groups said was meant to renounce the agency's overall legal authority to regulate the gas in the fight against global warming. EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the proposed rule followed President Donald Trump's directions to remove "unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry."

Axios: EPA proposes roll back to Obama-era methane regulations

The Environmental Protection Agency proposed new rules Thursday designed to ease Obama-era regulations on methane emissions from the oil-and-gas business. **Why it matters:** Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas. The oil and gas industry is a significant source of emissions from wells plus natural gas pipelines, compressors and other equipment.

Bloomberg Environment: EPA Seeks to Abandon Regulation of Methane Leaks From Oil Wells

The Trump administration is seeking to abandon regulations designed to stop methane leaks from oil and gas wells, a move opposed not just by environmentalists but even some energy companies that worry that it will undermine the appeal of natural gas as climate-friendly fuel. The proposal, unveiled Thursday by the Environmental Protection Agency, is the latest assault in President Donald Trump's campaign to weaken Obama-era measures fighting climate change, building on previous efforts to ease greenhouse gas emission limits on power plants and automobiles.

CBS: Energy industry may get looser oversight from Trump proposal to ease methane rules

Oil and gas companies may face far looser oversight of emissions of potent climate-changing methane gas under a proposal expected from the Trump administration as soon as Thursday, oil industry and environmental groups said. The government's plan would ease requirements on oil and gas sites to monitor for methane leaks and plug them. But not all energy companies are in support of the plan, with Shell U.S. President Gretchen Watkins telling the Washington Post on Thursday that it supports national limits on methane.

CNBC: Trump administration expected to roll back regulation on methane, a major climate change contributor

The Trump administration will announce on Thursday plans to weaken regulation on climate-changing methane emissions, according to multiple reports citing oil industry and environmental groups. The Environmental Protection

Agency's proposed rule would lessen restrictions on oil and gas sites to monitor and repair methane leaks from pipelines and storage facilities, the media outlets said. The rule would be the latest move by the Trump administration to roll back Obama-era emission regulations on major oil and gas industries, which are the main source of methane emissions in the U.S.

CNN: EPA proposes rule easing regulation of methane emissions

The Environmental Protection Agency announced a proposal on Thursday to ease regulation of methane emissions, a particularly potent greenhouse gas believed to contribute significantly to climate change, because it believes the Obama administration improperly regulated it. The proposed rule, expected this week, would no longer require the oil and gas industry to install technologies that monitor and limit leaks from new wells, tanks and pipelines. It's the latest move by the Trump administration that would disregard scientific beliefs of the threat the climate crisis poses to the planet.

Courthouse News Service: EPA Poised to Unravel Methane Rules, Alarming Climate Scientists

Unraveling rules that it had tried for years to put on hold, the Environmental Protection Agency released a proposal Thursday to cut regulations on methane, the second most potent greenhouse gas that accelerates global warming. The proposed rollback will remove federal inspection requirements for methane-well leaks as well as at methane pipelines and storage facilities. It also maintains regulations on methane produced by way of volatile organic compounds, a separate category of gases.

The Daily Caller: Trump Goes After Another Obama-Era Reg As EPA Plans To Ease Rules Affecting Oil Companies

The Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday a plan to loosen federal rules governing methane emissions, a move that could be a boon for some energy providers and setback for environmentalists, the agency said in a statement. The move will reverse standards set under President Barack Obama that require oil companies to install instruments on their pipelines and well heads that curb the release of methane, an emission researchers believe contributes to global warming. President Donald Trump spent his first two years eliminating scores of his predecessor's environmental legacy.

Financial Times: Trump moves to reverse methane emission limits

The Trump administration has taken another step towards rolling back US environmental regulations by proposing to remove limits on methane leaks for the oil and gas industry, despite protests from some of the world's largest oil companies themselves. Andrew Wheeler, the US Environmental Protection Agency head, on Thursday proposed removing rules that force companies to take strict precautions to avoid methane leaks while drilling for oil and gas.

Fox Business: Trump administration to roll back Obama-era regulations on methane emissions

The Trump administration announced a proposal on Thursday to reverse Obama-era rules on methane emissions, the greenhouse gas that's been linked to climate change, from the oil-and-gas industry — a multi-million dollar boon to the energy companies. Under the plan, widely released Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency would no longer require the industry to install technologies that monitor, limit and repair methane leaks from pipelines and storage facilities.

Fox News: Trump's EPA to roll back Obama-era regs on methane emissions from oil fields

The Trump administration on Thursday is expected to announce rollback regulations on methane emissions in oil fields — the latest push by the administration to undo Obama-era environmental regulations. The Environmental Protection Agency's plan would ease requirements on oil and gas sites to monitor for methane leaks and plug them, The Associated Press reported, citing industry and environmental groups.

Greenwire: EPA unveils plans to scrap Obama-era methane rules

EPA today unveiled two parallel proposals for how the agency would stop directly regulating methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, potentially slashing controls on greenhouse gases from the sector. EPA would only target volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, from new or modified sources in both plans — a move that would effectively halt any action by the administration to regulate existing oil and gas operations, the largest source of methane emissions from the sector.

The Guardian: Trump administration to roll back Obama-era pollution regulations

The Trump administration is rolling back requirements that oil and gas drillers correct leaks of methane – a potent heat-trapping pollutant contributing to the climate crisis. The Environmental Protection Agency announced the proposal on Thursday, against the wishes of some major oil companies.

The Hill: Trump administration proposes weaker monitoring of major greenhouse gas

A newly proposed Trump administration rule would allow for weaker monitoring of methane, a major greenhouse gas contributing to global warming. The proposed rule rolled out Thursday morning by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would eliminate current requirements on oil and gas companies to install technology to monitor methane emissions from pipelines, wells and facilities.

Houston Chronicle: EPA proposes rollback of methane regulations

The Trump administration will roll back Obama-era regulations limiting emissions of the potent greenhouse gas methane from oil and gas wells, even as many within the industry have set reducing those emissions as a goal in fighting climate change. Under a proposed rule change announced by the Environmental Protection Agency Thursday, oil and gas companies would no longer be required to inspect for methane leaks from existing wells, storage tanks, pipelines and other infrastructure.

Huffington Post: Trump Administration To Undo Limits On Methane, Ignoring Environmental Concerns

President Donald Trump's administration on Thursday reportedly plans to roll back regulation of methane emissions by the oil and gas industry — a major contributor to climate change. The proposed rule change reflects the Trump administration view that the government overstepped its authority with mandates during the Obama administration that oil and gas companies take steps to repair methane leaks, according to The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the rollback.

Los Angeles Times: EPA plans to abandon regulations on methane emissions, reports say

The Trump Administration is expected to announce a proposal to ease methane emission regulations in the oil and gas sector on Thursday, according to reports by the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. The Environmental Protection Agency will reportedly propose abandoning federal rules that require the oil and gas industry to install technology that monitors and curbs methane leaks in wells, pipelines and other operational facilities. Some major oil and gas companies have opposed the rollback.

New York Times: E.P.A. to Roll Back Regulations on Methane, a Potent Greenhouse Gas

The Trump administration laid out on Thursday a far-reaching plan to cut back on the regulation of methane emissions, a major contributor to climate change. The Environmental Protection Agency, in its proposed rule, aims to eliminate federal requirements that oil and gas companies install technology to detect and fix methane leaks from wells, pipelines and storage facilities. It will also reopen the question of whether the E.P.A. even has the legal authority to regulate methane as a pollutant.

Newsweek: Trump Administration Rolls Back Greenhouse Gas Regulations So Far Even Oil Companies Object

Just two days after President Donald Trump called himself an "environmentalist," his administration announced a rollback of methane gas emissions regulations so large that even oil companies are objecting to the change. In the proposed rule change, released by the Environmental Protection Agency Thursday morning, the agency would end a federal regulation that requires gas and oil companies to use technology to inspect for and repair methane leaks in their infrastructure. This would leave large segments of the oil and gas industry entirely uncontrolled with no pollution limits. Methane emissions are known to cause climate change.

Politico: Trump administration to seek rollback of methane pollution rule

The Trump administration will seek to roll back rules limiting methane pollution from oil and gas production, gutting a regulation put in place under President Barack Obama that was designed to curb emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas. The move is the latest by the Trump administration to eliminate rules designed to fight climate change despite the rising temperatures that saw July set a record as the hottest month on the books, as Arctic ice melting accelerates and forest fires rage around the globe.

Reuters: Trump EPA proposes easing methane limits at oil and gas operations

The Trump administration on Thursday proposed rescinding Obama-era limits on oil and gas industry emissions of methane, one of the main pollutants scientists link to climate change. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that easing a 2016 regulation that specifically targeted methane emissions from oil and gas wells, pipelines and storage would save energy companies up to \$123 million through 2025. The plan will undergo a period of public comment before being finalized, and environmental groups pledged court action to try to block repeal of the limits.

S&P Global: EPA's proposed rollback of methane regulations to impact marginal oil, gas wells

The Trump administration on Thursday unveiled its proposal to formally rescind federal regulations aimed at limiting methane emissions from oil and gas operations, an effort expected to most impact production from marginal US wells, accounting for roughly one-tenth of domestic oil and gas output. The US Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday the proposal was eliminating "unnecessary regulatory duplication" created by methane rules finalized in 2016 by the Obama-era EPA.

Slate: Trump Proposes Eliminating Methane Emissions Regulations for the Oil and Gas Industry

The environmental hits keep on coming from the Trump administration with news that the Environmental Protection Agency is now pushing to eliminate federal regulations on the oil and gas industry's methane emissions, a major contributor to climate change. The White House now wants to lift Obama-era requirements that oil and gas companies use technology to monitor and repair potential methane leaks from across the supply chain—from wells, pipelines, and storage facilities.

U.S. News & World Report: EPA Proposes Rollback on Methane Emissions Regulations

THE ENVIRONMENTAL Protection Agency on Thursday announced a plan that will weaken regulations of methane emissions. The proposed rule would lessen federal requirements for technology that monitors methane leaks from the oil and gas industry, which is the largest methane emissions source in the country. According to the EPA, the proposal will save the oil and gas industry \$17 to \$19 million a year.

Vice News: The EPA Is Deregulating One of the Most Climate-Destroying Greenhouse Gases

The world is on fire, all the ice is melting, and the Trump administration wants to turn up the heat. On Thursday, the Wall Street Journal reported, the Environmental Protection Agency will announce a new plan to deregulate methane emissions by the fossil fuel industry. The EPA's plan continues the rollback of moderate Obama-era policies, eliminating requirements that the industry monitor and limit methane leaks from newly constructed wells, tanks, and pipelines; it would also pause efforts to regulate existing sites.

The Wall Street Journal: Energy Companies Set to Get Reprieve on Methane Rules

The Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday that it plans to loosen federal rules on methane, a powerful greenhouse gas linked to climate change. The proposed rule would reverse standards enacted under President Barack Obama that required oil and gas operators to prevent the release of methane in new drilling wells, pipelines and storage facilities. It also challenges the notion that the federal government has the authority to regulate methane without first making a detailed determination that it qualifies as a pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

Washington Examiner: Daily on Energy: EPA won't regulate methane in latest Obama climate regulation rollback

The Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule Thursday that would eliminate the direct federal regulation of methane emissions from oil and gas operations, a major rollback of an Obama administration policy to combat climate change. Methane, the main component of natural gas, is more potent than carbon dioxide, although its emissions don't last as long in the atmosphere.

Washington Post: Trump administration to reverse limits on methane, a powerful greenhouse gas

The Environmental Protection Agency is set to announce Thursday that it will loosen federal rules on methane, a powerful greenhouse gas linked to climate change, according to two senior administration officials. The proposed rule will reverse standards enacted under former president Barack Obama that require oil and gas operations to install controls on their operations to curb the release of methane at the well head and in their transmission equipment, including pipelines, processing and storage facilities.

ABC News

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-administration-moves-roll-back-greenhouse-gas-rules/story?id=65264034>

Trump administration moves to roll back greenhouse gas rules on methane

By Stephanie Ebbs

The Trump administration announced its latest proposal to reverse Obama-era regulations on greenhouse gases on Thursday, the latest proposal targeting restrictions on the release of methane from oil and natural gas operations.

The move is the most recent in a series of policies meant to reverse policies put in place under the Obama administration intended to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change.

The Trump administration has argued those regulations were too burdensome on the industry. The new rules follow the president's directive to lift regulations on the energy sector in favor of expanding oil and natural gas production.

The Environmental Protection Agency proposal would remove parts of the natural gas production process from methane restrictions, including compressor stations and underground storage.

"The agency is proposing that the addition of these sources to the 2016 rule was not appropriate, noting that the agency did not make a separate finding to determine that the emissions from the transmission and storage segment of the industry causes or significantly contributes to air pollution that may endanger public health or welfare," the agency said in a statement.

The rule would revoke limits on methane emissions for other parts of the industry it says are redundant because it already regulates volatile organic compounds, including methane. The EPA says the proposal would save the oil and natural gas industry \$17 to \$19 million a year.

The announcement comes almost a year after EPA proposed a different rule to limit other methane restrictions.

Methane is less prevalent than carbon dioxide but is considered a more potent greenhouse gas because it absorbs more energy and can contribute more to warming in the atmosphere. EPA says methane is more than 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide in how much warming it can contribute to the atmosphere over time.

More than 30% of methane released in the U.S. in 2017 was from oil and natural gas operations, according to EPA.

Major oil and natural gas companies like Shell, BP and Exxon have said they support federal limits on methane emissions and are already taking steps to reduce emissions and prevent leaks.

"I urged the Administration earlier this year to write a rule for existing sources because I believe EPA's commitment to cost-effective regulations makes it uniquely qualified to write a workable rule," Shell U.S. President Gretchen Watkins said in a statement.

"Shell remains committed to achieving our target of maintaining methane emissions intensity below 0.2% by 2025 for all operated assets globally. Despite the Administration's proposal to no longer regulate methane, Shell's U.S. assets will continue to contribute to that global target. Additionally, Shell remains committed to cutting the Net Carbon Footprint of our energy products by around half by 2050. While the law may change in this instance, our environmental commitments will stand."

Methane accounts for roughly 10% of greenhouse gas emissions from human activity in the U.S, according to EPA data, mostly from natural gas production and livestock operations.

Like many of the administration's proposals the rule is expected to face legal challenges from environmental groups.

Associated Press

<https://www.apnews.com/e2872a46eb3e43bd928707bba2f2c031>

US proposing easing rules on climate-changing oil emissions

By Ellen Knickmeyer

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed revoking Obama-era regulations on climate-changing methane leaks from many oil facilities, a move that environmental groups said was meant to renounce the agency's overall legal authority to regulate the gas in the fight against global warming.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the proposed rule followed President Donald Trump's directions to remove "unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry."

The step would be the latest in a series easing the previous administration's emissions controls on the oil, gas and coal industries, including a 2016 rule regulating oil-industry methane leaks as a pollutant under the federal Clean Air Act.

Methane is a component of natural gas that's frequently wasted through leaks or intentional releases during drilling operations. The gas is considered a more potent contributor to climate change than carbon dioxide, although it occurs in smaller volumes.

Under Trump, both the Interior Department and the EPA have proposed a series of rules — some blocked by courts — to loosen regulations of methane emissions.

Environmental advocates and former EPA officials had said they expected the new methane plan to go further than previous proposals, with a goal of exempting companies from requirements to detect and stop methane leaks at existing oil and gas sites.

"Essentially, this is the umpteenth iteration of the EPA's exercise to define away its Clean Air Act authority ... to address air pollution and greenhouse gases," said Joseph Goffman, an EPA air official under President Barack Obama.

The oil and gas industry is the country's primary source of methane emissions, according to the EPA, accounting for nearly one-third in 2016.

While environmental groups pointed to the long-term impact, the oil industry said the direct immediate effect on methane emissions would be negligible. Controls on other, regulated pollutants would also capture methane in the pipeline, said Erik Milito of the American Petroleum Institute.

The Obama-era methane limits imposed "a disproportionate effect on small businesses" in the oil industry, Milito said. "A lot of mom and pops would have their wells shut in, elderly people with wells on their properties that could be shut down."

The rollbacks on emissions from oilfields, storage sites and pipelines have split the oil industry, worrying some in the industry about growing blowback in a world increasingly mindful of climate change.

Royal Dutch Shell this year urged the administration to crack down — not ease up — on the emissions. Many others in the oil and industry have welcomed the easing, however.

The latest rollback "highlights the Trump administration's complete contempt for our climate," Kassie Siegel of the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group, said in a statement. "The EPA is now so determined to actually increase greenhouse pollution that it's even shrugging off concerns from oil and gas companies about gutting these protections."

Axios

<https://www.axios.com/methane-regulation-rollbacks-climate-change-epa-0c0aeb58-f666-4cad-bead-9b78408f9ace.html>

EPA proposes roll back to Obama-era methane regulations

By Ben Geman and Ursula Perano

The Environmental Protection Agency proposed new rules Thursday designed to ease Obama-era regulations on methane emissions from the oil-and-gas business.

Why it matters: Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas. The oil and gas industry is a significant source of emissions from wells plus natural gas pipelines, compressors and other equipment.

- But the Trump administration argues there'd be "minimal environmental benefits if [the EPA] were to take the prior path," per an EPA press call on Thursday.

Details... The EPA is "co-proposing two actions":

- "In its primary proposal, the agency would remove sources in the transmission and storage segment of the oil and gas industry from regulation," a [release](#) reads.
- "In an alternative proposal, EPA would rescind the methane emissions limitations without removing from regulation any sources from the transmission and storage segment of the industry."

The intrigue: Oil companies aren't all on the same page. [According to the New York Times](#), the powerful lobbying group American Petroleum Institute praised the forthcoming plan.

- But the NYT notes that Shell, ExxonMobil and BP support federal restrictions.
- On Thursday's call, an EPA spokesperson said the business community has offered "positive comments from across the board."

What they're saying: Environmental groups are pushing back on the change.

"If EPA manages to finalize and implement this illegal proposal, it will have devastating impacts on our climate for years to come,"

— said Darin Schroeder, an attorney with the Clean Air Task Force

Of note: The EPA stated it expects downward trends in methane emissions to continue despite proposed deregulation.

Go deeper: [Exxon asks EPA to regulate methane emissions from oil and gas](#)

Bloomberg Environment

<https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/environment-and-energy/epa-seeks-to-abandon-regulation-of-methane-leaks-from-oil-wells>

EPA Seeks to Abandon Regulation of Methane Leaks From Oil Wells

By Jennifer Dlouhy

- Agency proposes ending direct regulation of the greenhouse gas
- Move would block requirement for mandates on existing wells

The Trump administration is seeking to abandon regulations designed to stop methane leaks from oil and gas wells, a move opposed not just by environmentalists but even some energy companies that worry that it will undermine the appeal of natural gas as climate-friendly fuel.

The proposal, unveiled Thursday by the Environmental Protection Agency, is the latest assault in President Donald Trump's campaign to weaken Obama-era measures fighting climate change, building on previous efforts to ease greenhouse gas emission limits on power plants and automobiles.

Although methane is the chief component of natural gas and therefore a valuable energy source in its own right, it is also a powerful heat-trapping pollutant. And the methane that escapes from pipelines, compressor stations and from oil wells has been blamed for up to a quarter of the planet's warming.

The Trump EPA was already moving on a separate track to relax requirements put in place by the Obama administration that forced energy companies to use specialized equipment at wells and search out methane leaks at the sites. The new measure would also short-circuit a legal requirement that similar curbs be imposed on a million existing wells, mandates that could disproportionately affect smaller, independent oil companies.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a news release the proposal "removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry."

Although independent oil producers backed the EPA's move, it comes against the wishes of several global energy companies, such as BP Plc and Royal Dutch Shell Plc, which have warned the administration's retreat on methane threatens to undermine the sales pitch for natural gas as a climate-friendly power source that burns cleaner than coal. Executives from both companies criticized the proposal Thursday.

Methane accounts for just 10% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, yet it packs a big punch. It has more than 84 times the heat-trapping potential of carbon dioxide the first two decades it escapes into the atmosphere, and is at least 28 times more powerful over a century. And the oil industry is the leading industrial source of it.

"There is overwhelming scientific evidence that methane is harmful -- more harmful than we thought -- and the oil and gas sector is a bigger contributor to that pollution than we thought," said Peter Zalzal with the Environmental Defense Fund.

The Obama administration took direct aim at the oil industry's methane emissions in 2016, by imposing requirements for energy companies to frequently seek and plug leaks at wells drilled after the regulation was put in place. Other requirements also managed to pare methane emissions but did so indirectly, by targeting other, conventional pollutants and seeking to stop the waste of natural gas extracted from federal lands.

Though the 2016 requirements were targeted to new wells, they triggered a legal requirement that the EPA also regulate methane from oilfield infrastructure put in place prior to that year. The expense and challenge of plugging leaks on some decades-old, low-producing wells could force some companies to shut in production at the sites, according to the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

Under Thursday's proposal, the EPA would effectively divide the oil and gas industry into two segments for the purposes of greenhouse gas regulation, with upstream wells classified separately from pipelines, tanks and natural gas transmission, which would effectively be exempted from methane mandates.

More than 40 oil and gas companies have made voluntary commitments to keep methane in check, even as some of them insist federal regulation is essential too.

"We have to reduce methane emissions for natural gas to realize its full potential in our energy mix," BP America Inc. Chairman Susan Dio said by email. "The more gas we keep in our pipes and equipment, the more we can provide to the market -- and the faster we can all move toward a lower-carbon future."

Environmental advocates have argued that voluntary industry steps are inadequate given the scale of the problem and within a highly fragmented industry. Oil companies with big balance sheets and wells concentrated in a few areas of the U.S. may be better able to absorb the costs of equipment retrofits, methane monitoring and leak-repair programs than smaller, independent producers with wide-ranging infrastructure.

"We believe sound environmental policies are foundational to the vital role natural gas can play in the energy transition and have made clear our support of 2016 law to regulate methane from new and modified onshore sources," Gretchen Watkins, president of Shell Oil Co. said in an emailed statement. Shell urged the administration to impose methane

requirements on existing wells, too, Watkins said, because the "EPA's commitment to cost-effective regulations makes it uniquely qualified to write a workable rule."

Supporters of the EPA's measure say the Obama administration went too far in deciding to specifically regulate methane, rather than focusing on paring conventional pollution from oil and gas infrastructure.

Existing EPA requirements -- which focus on paring the release of volatile organic compounds at oil and gas wells -- would still help rein in methane emissions at the sites, just indirectly. And as new wells are drilled -- and old wells stop producing -- more of them fall under those regulations targeting volatile organic compounds. By 2023, nearly 90% of all U.S. natural gas and oil production will fall under the earlier EPA requirements, according to the American Petroleum Institute.

But environmental advocates said the EPA proposal will squander time in an urgent fight against climate change.

The EPA is "proposing to give an entire segment of the oil and gas sector a pass from controlling its air pollution," said Darin Schroeder, an attorney with the Clean Air Task Force. "To justify these actions, EPA is ignoring decades of its own precedent and mountains of evidence that prove that not only is reducing methane from the entire industry easily done, but it is also extremely important if we are to avoid the most catastrophic impacts from climate change."

CBS News

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-methane-rollback-energy-industry-may-get-looser-oversight-from-trump-proposal-to-ease-methane-rules/>

Energy industry may get looser oversight from Trump proposal to ease methane rules

Oil and gas companies may face far looser oversight of emissions of potent climate-changing methane gas under a proposal expected from the Trump administration as soon as Thursday, oil industry and environmental groups said.

The government's plan would ease requirements on oil and gas sites to monitor for methane leaks and plug them. But not all energy companies are in support of the plan, with Shell U.S. President Gretchen Watkins telling the Washington Post on Thursday that it supports national limits on methane.

The Environmental Protection Agency's move would be the latest in a series by the administration easing Obama-era emissions controls on the oil, gas and coal industries, including for methane.

Methane is a component of natural gas that's frequently wasted through leaks or intentional releases during drilling operations. The gas is considered a more potent contributor to climate change than carbon dioxide, although it occurs in smaller volumes.

Under President Donald Trump, both the Interior Department and the EPA have proposed a series of rules — some blocked by courts — to loosen regulations of methane emissions.

Environmental concerns

Environmental advocates expected the new methane plan to go further than previous proposals, with a goal of exempting companies from requirements to detect and stop methane leaks at existing oil and gas sites.

For the EPA, part of the goal is "they want to get rid of direct regulation of methane," said Matt Watson, a vice president of the energy program at the Environmental Defense Fund, an advocacy group.

Other environmental activists expressed their concerns with the proposal, such as environmentalist and 350.org founder Bill McKibben, who wrote on Twitter, "The fracking boom is spewing clouds of methane, it's a huge driver of climate change, and now we're going to drop the (minimal) regulation we've had in place."

The oil and gas industry is the nation's primary source of methane emissions, according to the EPA, accounting for nearly one-third in 2016.

Oil industry is split

The administration rollbacks on emissions from oilfields, storage sites and pipelines have split the oil industry, worrying some in the industry about growing blowback in a world increasingly mindful of climate change.

Shell U.S. told the Washington Post it would continue to work toward its goal of reducing its methane leaks to less than 0.2 percent by 2025.

"We believe sound environmental policies are foundational to the vital role natural gas can play in the energy transition and have made clear our support of 2016 law to regulate methane from new and modified onshore sources," Shell's Watkins told the publication. "Despite the administration's proposal to no longer regulate methane, Shell's U.S. assets will continue to contribute to that global target."

Royal Dutch Shell this year urged the administration to crack down — not ease up — on the emissions. Many others in the oil and industry have welcomed the easing, however.

The latest rollback "highlights the Trump administration's complete contempt for our climate," Kassie Siegel of the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group, said in a statement. "The EPA is now so determined to actually increase greenhouse pollution that it's even shrugging off concerns from oil and gas companies about gutting these protections."

CNBC

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/29/trump-to-roll-back-methane-climate-change-regulations.html>

Trump administration expected to roll back regulation on methane, a major climate change contributor

By Emma Newburger

KEY POINTS

- The Trump administration will announce on Thursday plans to weaken regulation on climate-changing methane emissions, according to multiple reports citing oil industry and environmental groups.
- The Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rule would lessen restrictions on oil and gas sites to monitor and repair methane leaks from pipelines and storage facilities.
- The rule would be the latest move by the Trump administration to roll back Obama-era emission regulations on major oil and gas industries, which are the main source of methane emissions in the U.S.

The Trump administration will announce on Thursday plans to weaken regulation on climate-changing methane emissions, according to multiple reports citing oil industry and environmental groups.

The Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rule would lessen restrictions on oil and gas sites to monitor and repair methane leaks from pipelines and storage facilities, the media outlets said.

The rule would be the latest move by the Trump administration to roll back Obama-era emission regulations on major oil and gas industries, which are the main source of methane emissions in the U.S.

Carbon dioxide is the most substantial greenhouse gas, and methane is the second. However, methane has 80 times the heating-trapping capability of carbon dioxide during the first 20 years in the atmosphere, and comprises nearly 10% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions.

Some major oil, gas and auto companies have actually opposed the Trump administration's rollback proposals.

Four of the world's biggest automakers opposed Trump's plan to let vehicles pollute more by striking a deal in California to curb their own emissions. And some electric utility companies have opposed the EPA's weakened regulations on toxic mercury emissions by coal-burning power plants.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the proposed ruling.

CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/29/politics/methane-emissions-regulations-epa-rollback/index.html>

EPA proposes rule easing regulation of methane emissions

By Veronica Stracqualursi and Gregory Wallace

The Environmental Protection Agency announced a proposal on Thursday to ease regulation of methane emissions, a particularly potent greenhouse gas believed to contribute significantly to climate change, because it believes the Obama administration improperly regulated it.

The proposed rule, expected this week, would no longer require the oil and gas industry to install technologies that monitor and limit leaks from new wells, tanks and pipelines. It's the latest move by the Trump administration that would disregard scientific beliefs of the threat the climate crisis poses to the planet.

"The proposal would remove regulatory duplication and save the industry millions of dollars in compliance costs each year -- while maintaining health and environmental regulations on oil and gas sources that the agency considers appropriate," the EPA said in a statement. It estimated savings at between \$17 million and \$19 million annually.

It said the proposal would "rescind emissions limits for methane, from the production and processing segments of the industry."

The proposal calls for maintaining regulations of volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. "The controls to reduce VOCs emissions also reduce methane at the same time, so separate methane limitations for that segment of the industry are redundant," the EPA said.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the proposed new rule.

The Trump administration has previously targeted the Obama administration's 2016 rule, first proposing to halt its enforcement while considering replacing or repealing it. That attempt was overruled by a federal court.

The industry has been divided over how methane should be regulated.

The American Petroleum Institute, an industry group, said Thursday the changes are not a "rollback," but rather "a realignment with the agency's obligations under the Clean Air Act." The changes, the group wrote in a blog post, "could reduce duplication with state programs, provide greater clarity for industry in its regulatory compliance and, ultimately, further lower methane and other emissions and protect the environment by making it easier for operators to gain approvals for use of new, innovative technologies to detect fugitive emissions for repair."

Shell, on the other hand, said it generally supports the Obama-era regulation and has its own plans to reduce its methane emissions. "Despite the Administration's proposal to no longer regulate methane, Shell's US assets will continue to contribute to that global target," said Gretchen Watkins, the president of its US-based business.

Dominant greenhouse gases released into the Earth's atmosphere -- carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide -- have reached record levels in 2018, and their global warming power is now 43% stronger than in 1990, according to a new report by the American Meteorological Society released Monday.

In the first two decades after its release, methane is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide, according to the Environmental Defense Fund. Methane is at first much more dangerous than carbon dioxide when it comes to the climate because of how effectively it absorbs heat.

Once the EPA's new proposal is published in the Federal Register, there is a 60-day window for public comment and a public hearing will be held.

The Wall Street Journal, which earlier published an interview with the EPA official announcing the proposal, reported the agency intends to finalize the methane emission rule by 2020. The agency said it also plans to finalize a related methane rule "in the upcoming months."

President Donald Trump, who previously called climate change a hoax, withdrew the US in 2017 from the Paris climate accord, which aims at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Earlier this week, the President skipped a climate change session at the G7 meeting in France, citing a scheduling conflict.

Courthouse News Service

<https://www.courthousenews.com/epa-poised-to-unravel-methane-rules-alarming-climate-scientists/>

EPA Poised to Unravel Methane Rules, Alarming Climate Scientists

By Brandi Bunchman

Unraveling rules that it had tried for years to put on hold, the Environmental Protection Agency released a proposal Thursday to cut regulations on methane, the second most potent greenhouse gas that accelerates global warming.

The proposed rollback will remove federal inspection requirements for methane-well leaks as well as at methane pipelines and storage facilities. It also maintains regulations on methane produced by way of volatile organic compounds, a separate category of gases.

Methane is the primary ingredient in natural gas and it is a powerhouse at trapping heat. It traps more heat than carbon dioxide when released into the atmosphere, and it makes up nearly 10% of all greenhouse gases emitted from the United States.

Under last year's recommendations by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, methane emissions would need to drop 35% below levels set in 2010 for the planet to hold rising temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

United Nations special representative Rachel Kyte told The New York Times on Thursday that the proposal was "extraordinarily harmful."

"Just at a time when the federal government's job should be to help localities and states move faster toward cleaner energy and a cleaner economy, just at that moment when speed and scale is what's at stake, the government is walking off the field," Kyte said.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said Thursday that the 2016 regulations were unfair because the agency had failed to make separate findings determining whether the emissions from sources like compressor stations and storage vessels were in fact the cause of increased air pollution.

The rollback is in line with an executive order issued by President Donald Trump last year directing federal agencies to further develop energy resources.

"The Trump administration recognizes that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use," Wheeler said. "Since 1990, natural gas production in the United States has almost doubled while methane emissions across the natural gas industry have fallen by nearly 15%. Our regulations should not stifle this innovation and progress."

Bill McKibben, who founded the climate change campaign organization 350.org, warned Thursday, however, that this reversal of methane regulations poses an even greater danger than most might initially realize.

"It's always been difficult for the media, and hence the public, to understand methane," McKibben said in an email. "As our carbon emissions have fallen, our methane emissions have risen steadily — it's possible that our total greenhouse gas emissions have not gone down at all. What a farce."

When he wrote about the phenomenon for The Nation, McKibben noted that Harvard researchers had published a paper in Geophysical Research Letters that said the U.S. is leaking methane at a rate far greater than original EPA estimates. According to satellite and ground observations, from 2002 to 2014, methane emissions actually shot up over 30%.

This, in turn, has forced more public and congressional focus on carbon dioxide.

As a result, coal-fired power plants have shuttered and have been steadily replaced with natural gas-burning plants.

While this helps carbon dioxide levels tick downward, McKibben likened this method to cutting one's hair for weight loss.

The EPA conducted an impact-analysis study on the regulation and reportedly found that if enforced, it would save the oil and gas industry \$17 to \$19 million per year, or roughly \$97 to \$123 million between 2019 and 2025.

If it isn't stopped, the new rule is expected to take effect next year. The rule must undergo a 60-day public-comment period before being finalized.

Oil and gas companies are split in their reaction to the anticipated rollback. In the past, companies like Exxon have warned against rolling back methane regulations. The company advocated for maintaining Obama-era standards in a letter to the EPA last December.

Exxon and other oil and gas companies, including Royal Dutch Shell, have a stake in maintaining the methane regulations because a rollback could threaten to put a negative spotlight on the natural-gas industry at a time when anxieties around a rapidly warming planet are already high.

When the EPA was under the direction of former administrator Scott Pruitt, the agency attempted to suspend the methane regulation broadly. Pruitt first ordered that the rule be suspended for 90 days and then ordered the agency extend it to a two-year moratorium.

When a divided D.C. Circuit panel nipped that plan in the bud two years ago, the majority called the EPA unreasonable and said the agency did not have the sole authority to overrule Clean Air Act terms.

"EPA's stay, in other words, is essentially an order delaying the rule's effective date, and this court has held that such orders are tantamount to amending or revoking a rule," wrote U.S. Circuit Judges David Tatel and Robert Wilkins, appointees of Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, respectively.

Against a dissent by U.S. Circuit Judge Janice Rogers Brown, who was appointed by President George W. Bush, the court sent the EPA back to the drawing board, saying only a new rule could undo the Obama-era rule.

The Daily Caller

<https://dailycaller.com/2019/08/29/methane-trump-obama-epa-oil/>

Trump Goes After Another Obama-Era Reg As EPA Plans To Ease Rules Affecting Oil Companies

By Chris White

The Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday a plan to loosen federal rules governing methane emissions, a move that could be a boon for some energy providers and setback for environmentalists, the agency said in a statement.

The move will reverse standards set under President Barack Obama that require oil companies to install instruments on their pipelines and well heads that curb the release of methane, an emission researchers believe contributes to global warming. President Donald Trump spent his first two years eliminating scores of his predecessor's environmental legacy.

Trump officials believe the fossil fuel industry has an incentive to limit methane because capturing it allows companies to sell more gas, officials told WaPo on the condition of anonymity. Such changes will save the industry between \$17 million and \$19 million a year, the EPA noted.

“EPA’s proposal delivers on President Trump’s executive order and removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry,” EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a statement. “The Trump Administration recognizes that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use. Since 1990, natural gas production in the United States has almost doubled while methane emissions across the natural gas industry have fallen by nearly 15%.”

Some of the largest oil companies in the U.S. are not on board with the move.

“We believe sound environmental policies are foundational to the vital role natural gas can play in the energy transition and have made clear our support of 2016 law to regulate methane from new and modified onshore sources,” Shell President Gretchen Watkins said in a statement Thursday before the announcement.

U.S. assets will continue to contribute to that global target.”

Part of the concern from an environmental perspective is that methane is a significant contributor to the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, even though the gas dissipates quicker than carbon dioxide.

The EPA will continue regulating compounds released during oil and gas operations and avoid regulating methane directly, according to documents WaPo obtained. Trump’s move comes after the Department of Interior moved in 2018 to ease such requirements for oil and gas companies operating on federal and tribal land.

Activists are threatening to block the move in courts.

“This reckless rollback highlights the Trump administration’s complete contempt for our climate,” Kassie Siegel, director of the Climate Law Institute at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement.

Lobbyists for the energy industry have long supported nixing what they describe as Obama’s regulatory morass.

Obama’s methane rule “was the definition of red tape. It was a record-keeping nightmare that was technically impossible to execute in the field,” Kathleen Sgamma, president of the Western Energy Alliance, an association of independent oil companies based in Colorado, said in September 2018 when Trump last considered such a move.

Trump has sought ways to ding several of Obama’s major environmental regulations. The EPA proposed repealing a rule on carbon dioxide pollution from vehicle tailpipes in 2018, which is under legal review. Former EPA head Scott Pruitt proposed replacing the rule on carbon dioxide pollution with a weaker one freeing up coal power plants.

Financial Times

<https://www.ft.com/content/dae5ce62-ca67-11e9-af46-b09e8bfe60c0>

Trump moves to reverse methane emission limits

By Kiran Stacey and Anjali Raval

The Trump administration has taken another step towards rolling back US environmental regulations by proposing to remove limits on methane leaks for the oil and gas industry, despite protests from some of the world’s largest oil companies themselves.

Andrew Wheeler, the US Environmental Protection Agency head, on Thursday proposed removing rules that force companies to take strict precautions to avoid methane leaks while drilling for oil and gas.

Methane, which is released during oil and gas drilling if there is a leak or if waste gas is not completely flared, is one of the main greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

The proposal, which is the latest attempt by the White House to row back on environmental rules imposed under then-President Barack Obama, is particularly notable because large oil companies have opposed it amid mounting pressure from investors to adhere to stronger environmental standards.

The last few attempts were like a chisel to the existing methane emissions regulations. This is like an axe Ben Ratner, Environmental Defense Fund “The Trump Administration recognises that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimise leaks and maximise its use,” Mr Wheeler said in a statement. “Since 1990, natural gas production in the United States has almost doubled while methane emissions across the natural gas industry have fallen by nearly 15 per cent.

“Our regulations should not stifle this innovation and progress.”

While the turnaround in policy was welcomed by the American Petroleum Institute, which represents a large part of the oil and gas industry, some major individual companies such as BP, ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell have opposed it.

Under the EPA’s proposal, it would continue to regulate methane emissions, but only indirectly, as far as they come under separate rules regarding so-called “volatile organic compounds”.

BP said on Thursday it would “continue to advocate for the direct regulation of methane”. Susan Dio, the chair of BP America said: “Simply, the more gas we keep in our pipes and equipment, the more we can provide to the market — and the faster we can all move toward a lower-carbon future.”

ExxonMobil said in a statement to the EPA in December: “We believe the correct mix of policies and reasonable regulations help reduce emissions, further supporting the benefits of natural gas in the energy mix.”

The EPA said as a result of the rules being rescinded, an extra 370,000 short tons of methane — equivalent to 8.4m tonnes of carbon dioxide — would be emitted. This would save oil and gas companies between \$17m and \$19m a year, the agency said.

The agency will now allow 60 days for comment on the plan, before coming up with a final ruling.

Ben Ratner at the Environmental Defense Fund said on Thursday: “This is an extreme rollback from the Trump administration. The last few attempts were like a chisel to the existing methane emissions regulations. This is like an axe.”

“Some states can, and will continue to regulate, but there are plenty that will not. The remaining nationwide environmental regulations would be a small sliver of what is needed to address the methane problem”. Recommended Moral Money Cargill pledges to cut methane emissions from its beef business

Mr Trump has sought to reverse a series of Obama-era climate policies, including vehicle emissions standards and mercury emissions by coal-burning power plants, enraging environmentalists and even oil and gas executives.

Mr Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist, told the Financial Times in May that he did not see tackling climate change as his top priority. Mr Trump has previously said he does not believe climate change is caused by humans and is planning to pull the US out of the Paris climate agreement.

Fox Business

<https://www.foxbusiness.com/energy/trump-epa-methane-emissions-regulations-rollback>

Trump administration to roll back Obama-era regulations on methane emissions

By Megan Henney

The Trump administration announced a proposal on Thursday to reverse Obama-era rules on methane emissions, the greenhouse gas that's been linked to climate change, from the oil-and-gas industry — a multi-million dollar boon to the energy companies.

Under the plan, widely released Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency would no longer require the industry to install technologies that monitor, limit and repair methane leaks from pipelines and storage facilities.

The new rule, which would loosen the requirement for the industry to install technologies limiting leaks, marks the latest attempt by President Trump to roll back Obama-era emissions regulations on oil and gas industries. It would also eliminate legal limits for methane emissions from industry sites.

The oil and gas industry is the biggest contributor of methane emissions in the country, accounting for almost one-third in 2016. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, if methane leaks into the air before being used, it absorbs the sun's heat, warming the atmosphere. In the first two decades after its release, methane is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

"EPA's proposal delivers on President Trump's executive order and removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry," EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a statement. "The Trump administration recognizes that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use."

But several major gas companies, including ExxonMobil, Shell and BP, actually oppose the move, stressing the need to reduce methane emissions in the atmosphere.

Similarly, four of the world's biggest automakers sidestepped the Trump administration at the end of July, signing a deal with California to raise standards governing gas mileage and emissions instead of backing the White House's plan to roll back Obama-era fuel efficiency rules.

In 2017, the EPA tried to suspend the regulation on methane; however, a federal appeals court blocked the move.

Fox News

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trumps-epa-rollback-obama-era-regs-on-methane>

Trump's EPA to roll back Obama-era regs on methane emissions from oil fields

By Adam Shaw

The Trump administration on Thursday is expected to announce rollback regulations on methane emissions in oil fields — the latest push by the administration to undo Obama-era environmental regulations.

The Environmental Protection Agency's plan would ease requirements on oil and gas sites to monitor for methane leaks and plug them, The Associated Press reported, citing industry and environmental groups.

The oil and gas industry is the nation's primary source of methane emissions, accounting for nearly one-third in 2016.

Environmental advocates said they expect the plan to go further than previous proposals, and aim to exempt companies from requirements to detect and stop leaks at oil and gas sites.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the plan would also stop legal requirements that force the EPA to set rules on emissions from pre-existing well and industry sites.

"The purpose of this rule is to get to the fundamental basis of whether [methane] should have been regulated in the first place," Anne Idsal, the acting assistant administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Air and

Radiation, told the Journal. "It's not about whether we're doing the maximum we can or should do to deal with" climate change.

The proposal begins a 60-day public comment period and then an administration review. The Journal reports that the administration aims to finalize the rules in 2020.

Methane is a component of natural gas that is often wasted through releases during drilling operations, and is considered by scientists as a more powerful contributor to climate change than carbon dioxide, although there is less of it.

It is the latest in a series of aggressive moves by the administration to roll back regulations imposed by the administration of former President Obama.

The EPA in June finalized plans for replacing Obama-era regulations on emissions from coal-fired power plants. Administrator Andrew Wheeler also signed the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, which gives individual states wide discretion to decide whether to require limited efficiency upgrades at individual coal-fired power plants.

That rule, once fully implemented, allows states to select their own energy plans. States will be given three years to submit the plan and the EPA will have 12 months to approve it. Wheeler called it a sign that "fossil fuels will continue to be an important part of the mix" in the U.S. energy supply.

President Trump has long been skeptical about the effect emissions and other activities have on climate change. Last year he also pulled the U.S. out of the international Paris climate accord, which the U.S. entered into under President Obama.

Greenwire

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1061110633>

EPA unveils plans to scrap Obama-era methane rules

By Niina Farah

EPA today unveiled two parallel proposals for how the agency would stop directly regulating methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, potentially slashing controls on greenhouse gases from the sector.

EPA would only target volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, from new or modified sources in both plans — a move that would effectively halt any action by the administration to regulate existing oil and gas operations, the largest source of methane emissions from the sector.

Anne Idsal, acting head of EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, described the change as "eliminating regulatory duplication," saying the plans would have net benefits of about \$10 million per year for the industry.

The agency would amend 2016 New Source Performance Standards on new and modified oil and gas pollution sources, part of a broad push by the Obama team targeting methane releases.

Idsal said, "Our regulations should not stifle innovation and progress," especially when she said the Obama rule "would already provide minimal benefits."

In addition to just targeting VOCs, the main proposal would stop regulating the transmission and storage segments of the oil and gas sector altogether.

This includes scrutiny of sources like transmission compressor stations, pneumatic controllers and underground storage tanks.

The agency says the Obama administration should have released an endangerment finding demonstrating these segments of the industry significantly affect public health and welfare.

In an alternative proposal, EPA would simply switch its targeted pollutant to VOCs but maintain regulation across the transmission and storage sections.

Impacts

An EPA fact sheet stated that the rulemaking's impact on new and modified sources would result in 370,000 short tons of methane released — the equivalent of 8.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide between 2019 and 2025.

VOCs would also increase by 10,000 short tons, and other hazardous pollutants would go up by 300 short tons over the same period.

While the agency is justifying its plans by arguing that controls on VOCs also control methane, Idsal did not address the proportion of VOCs present compared with methane along the supply chain.

Industry groups have noted that most VOCs are eliminated during gas processing, so there would be little present to regulate anyway in the transmission and storage sections.

Not only would the proposals eliminate the requirement to control methane emissions from a portion of new and modified sources, EPA is arguing it is no longer required to regulate existing sources.

With the current Obama regulation in place, EPA must draft an existing source rule under Section 111(d) under the Clean Air Act.

But by changing the regulated pollutant to VOCs, EPA would no longer be required under the Clean Air Act to draft a rule to regulate all existing oil and gas sources, which make up the vast majority of methane emissions. In its place would be a patchwork system of guidelines and state-level regulations (*Climatewire*, Aug. 15).

"We are precluded from regulating existing sources, that is the position we are taking," said Idsal in a conference call.

Mixed views from industry

That could be a boon for small producers that produce 15 or fewer barrels of oil per day and that account for 770,000 of 1 million existing sources, according to the Independent Petroleum Association of America. IPAA maintains the regulation poses a heavy financial burden to these producers (*Greenwire*, Aug. 12).

In a statement, IPAA praised the EPA proposals, saying a combination of state-level rules and existing guidelines for oil and gas in ozone nonattainment areas provide better alternatives for regulating older, smaller wells.

Idsal denied the rule change was meant to benefit any specific type of oil and gas producer. "We are taking a broad view going forward, this is by no means targeted to any segment of the oil and gas industry," she said.

Not all segments of the oil and gas industry have been seeking the rule changes. Major oil and gas companies like Royal Dutch Shell PLC, BP PLC and Exxon Mobil Corp. have come out in support of maintaining the Obama-era guidelines.

Idsal said oil and gas companies that saw a benefit in more stringent controls could continue to implement them. "We don't preclude anyone from going above and beyond if that's what they conclude they need to do from a business and compliance standpoint," she said.

'Exercise in absurdity'

Environmental groups and former EPA officials swiftly condemned the rule change for ignoring climate science and the added risk posed by methane emissions, which have 25 times the heat-trapping capability of CO2 over a 100-year time span.

"This is another example of EPA responding to a subset of companies in a fossil intensive industry to rollback sensible measures that would reduce emissions of methane," Janet McCabe, former acting head of EPA's air office, said in a statement.

The Clean Air Task Force noted that the Obama administration's rule had already been in place since its passage in 2016 and had been reducing methane, VOCs and other hazardous air pollutants from the sector.

The environmental group noted the industry had already found regulation of methane from transmission and storage was "highly cost-effective," and reversing course was merely an attempt to allow the sector to ignore the full impact of methane emissions from the sector.

"EPA's logic here is an exercise in absurdity," said Darin Schroeder an attorney at CATF.

Lauren Pagel, policy director at Earthworks, said the environmental group has used optical gas imaging cameras to track methane emissions and document the impact of unregulated oil and gas industries on local communities.

Pagel noted that some major oil and gas companies had also urged the Trump administration to preserve the 2016 methane rule.

"The proposed elimination of critical national safeguards against oil and gas methane pollution is reckless, and it will impact millions of families living with oil and gas pollution in their backyards," she said in a statement.

Earthjustice vowed to sue the administration to keep the Obama rule in place.

'Don't do this'

As expected, the methane rollback earned quick reproach from Democrats on Capitol Hill, who said it would make climate change worse and endanger lives.

Rep. Don Beyer (D-Va.) noted that July was the hottest month in recorded history, underscoring the potential damage of increased greenhouse gas emissions.

"The threat of climate change to human life and livelihoods has never been clearer, and yet the Trump Administration is acting to allow an increase in the dangerous emissions which cause it," Beyer said in a statement.

"It should be telling for everyone trying to make sense of this move that even fossil fuel companies think they are going too far," he said.

Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change, took to [Twitter](#) to urge President Trump to "hear the warnings of America's climate scientists, military, intelligence & national security experts, farmers, economists, doctors, nurses, business leaders, victims of flooding and wildfires, all pointing to threats we face from climate change."

"Don't do this," he wrote.

New Mexico Democratic Sen. Tom Udall, whose state is working on its own methane regulations for its burgeoning oil and gas industry, called the rollback an "affront to New Mexicans."

"We should be strengthening protections for people and the environment from methane, not weakening them," Udall said in a statement.

'No environmental benefit'

Republicans praised the proposal. Given voluntary methane emission reductions by the oil and gas industry and regulation at the state level, there's little need for a federal rule, they said.

"The state of Wyoming already regulates methane emissions from oil and gas production," Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) said in a statement. "There's no need for Washington to pile on. I will work with Wyoming to evaluate the Environmental Protection Agency's new proposal."

Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), a longtime backer of oil and gas and a former EPW Committee chairman, was slightly more forceful in his praise for the Trump administration's proposal. The Obama-era methane rule, he said, "had no environmental benefit and created needless costs."

"Methane emissions have continued to decrease by voluntary actions initiated by industry, all while oil and gas production has skyrocketed," Inhofe said in a statement. "With this kind of progress, why would regulation be necessary?"

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/29/trump-administration-roll-back-methane-regulations>

Trump administration to roll back Obama-era pollution regulations

By Emily Holden

The Trump administration is rolling back requirements that oil and gas drillers correct leaks of methane – a potent heat-trapping pollutant contributing to the climate crisis.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced the proposal on Thursday, against the wishes of some major oil companies.

Trump will reverse standards issued by Barack Obama that forced companies to install controls to curb methane releases from drilling operations, pipelines and storage facilities. The EPA is claiming the changes would save the oil and gas industry \$17m to \$19m a year, or up to \$123m by 2025.

Agency administrator Andrew Wheeler, a former energy lobbyist, said methane is valuable so industry already has an incentive to minimize leaks. He called existing rules "unnecessary and duplicative".

The Trump administration has moved to erase all of Obama's climate policies and to ease other pollution controls for oil, gas and coal companies. Not all of industry has supported those changes. For example, car companies are currently pushing back against a weakening of mileage standards.

The advocacy group the Clean Air Task Force said the EPA is ignoring decades of its own precedent and mountains of evidence that cutting methane is easy and extremely important.

"If the EPA manages to finalize and implement this illegal proposal, it will have devastating impacts on our climate for years to come," said the group's attorney Darin Schroeder.

He said the EPA's methane rollbacks will lead to industry "dumping an additional 1.2m tons of methane into the air in 2025 – which will warm the planet as much as the pollution from 22m cars."

Janet McCabe, a top air official under Obama, noted that methane has about 25 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide. Its impacts could be even larger. And methane makes up about 10% of warming pollutants in the US.

A study by the advocacy group the Environmental Defense Fund also argues the oil and gas industry is releasing more methane than is reported.

McCabe said the rule changes are a “rejection of the vast – the increasing – body of science that shows that climate change is affecting humans around the globe”. She said the rule changes would make regulations more uncertain for companies.

Some of the companies that have already made investments in eliminating their methane leaks agreed. The oil trade group the American Petroleum Institute supports the rollback, but Exxon, Shell and BP have spoken in favor of restrictions. Smaller oil producers say the Obama standards would be too expensive and would make it hard for them to compete with the majors.

The API argues that nixing the rules will “strengthen emissions standards” by reducing duplication with existing state programs, providing clarity for industry and making it easier for operators to use “new, innovative technologies”.

Congressman Don Beyer, a Democrat from Virginia, said it should be telling that the industry itself is split over the changes.

“Last month the planet experienced its hottest month in recorded history. The threat of climate change to human life and livelihoods has never been clearer, and yet the Trump administration is acting to allow an increase in the dangerous emissions which cause it,” Beyer said.

The Hill

<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/459285-trump-administration-proposes-weaker-methane-regulations>

Trump administration proposes weaker monitoring of major greenhouse gas

By Miranda Green and Rebecca Beitsch

A newly proposed Trump administration rule would allow for weaker monitoring of methane, a major greenhouse gas contributing to global warming.

The proposed rule rolled out Thursday morning by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would eliminate current requirements on oil and gas companies to install technology to monitor methane emissions from pipelines, wells and facilities.

Methane is a major component of natural gas and frequently leaks from drilling and transportation. While the gas has a shorter lifespan than carbon dioxide, another major greenhouse gas contributor, methane is significantly more harmful. Some studies indicate that the climate change-linked gas is 80 times more adept at trapping heat in the atmosphere in the first 20 years than carbon dioxide.

EPA said the oil and gas industry is already interested in capturing valuable methane and the new rule would reduce their overhead, saving them millions of dollars in compliance-related spending.

Agency officials said Thursday that the new rule would still maintain “appropriate” health and environmental regulations.

“EPA’s proposal delivers on President Trump’s executive order and removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry,” Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a statement.

“The Trump Administration recognizes that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use. Since 1990, natural gas production in the United States has almost doubled while methane emissions across the natural gas industry have fallen by nearly 15 percent. Our regulations should not stifle this innovation and progress.”

The changes would amend a previous methane regulation determined under Obama in 2016. That Obama rule estimated that regulation of the gas would save the country nearly \$690 million per year in social costs. In comparison,

the Trump administration's proposal estimates savings of \$97 to \$123 million between 2019 to 2025 for the oil and gas industry.

The Obama-era rule was also designed to reduce 500,000 short tons of methane a year. The latest rule estimates it would reduce 370,000 short tons annually.

Oil and gas companies have largely been in support of regulating methane.

The president of BP America, Susan Dio, called methane regulations "the right thing to do for the planet" in a March op-ed.

The chairwoman said it was "essential" that the EPA regulate the greenhouse gas.

Environmentalists and former agency officials said the rule won't just lead to an increase in harmful methane, but that it could also undermine the EPA's authority to regulate the gas and could block future administrations from taking meaningful action to do so.

"I would say it's a lose-lose-lose. It's a bad environmental outcome, it's a bad outcome for what the industry itself is now saying it needs, and it's pretty much outright sabotage of the EPA's own legal authority and what the Clean Air Act was enacted to accomplish," said Joseph Goffman, who helped develop the Obama-era regulations on methane at EPA and now serves as executive director of the Environmental & Energy Law Program at Harvard Law School.

Critics compared Thursday's proposed rule to the administration's recent replacement of the Obama era Clean Power Plan (CPP), which weakened pollution regulations. Environmental groups have already sued over the rule, but legal experts say a loss on their side could limit the EPA's ability to address climate changing pollution in administrations to come.

"This not only is the Trump EPA abandoning the effort to regulate methane, but it looks like it's going to be propelling a legal theory that will subvert the fundamental authority of the Clean Air Act to regulate it," Goffman said. "It's not just that they're sabotaging climate policy--they're sabotaging the foundation of environmental law itself."

Supporters of the rule unveiled Thursday say it will allow surging oil and gas industry in the U.S. to be more successful. The U.S. in the past year became the top producer of liquid natural gas.

"The United States has become the world's leading oil and natural gas producer, providing affordable, reliable power to families and businesses. But heavy-handed regulations yielding negligible climate benefits threaten the United States' ability to produce affordable energy. The Obama administration's methane regulations were a costly, non-solution in search of a problem," said Thomas Roe, a fellow in energy and environment policy at the Heritage Foundation.

The American Petroleum Institute, a major oil and gas lobby, said Thursday's regulation would leave the sector "effectively regulated."

"We support EPA's efforts to adhere to its statutory obligations under the Clean Air Act," Erik Milito, API's vice president of upstream and industry operations, said in a statement.

Anne Idsal, acting assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, estimated that changes to the rule would not stop the current decreasing trend of methane gas in the atmosphere, arguing that industry has an incentive to capture and sell the gas.

"Methane is a valuable resource," she said on a call with reporters, adding that industry was on an upward trend in capturing the gas. "There is every incentive to minimize any fugitive methane emissions, capture it, use it, and sell it down the road."

Janet McCabe, who filled the same role as Isdal under the Obama administration and helped develop the standards the Trump team is now attempting to roll back, though, said the EPA regulations will complicate things for the oil and gas industry.

“This administration is injecting a whole new round of uncertainty cause whatever comes out there will most certainly be litigation” once the rule is finalized, she said. “Companies are planning now want to know if they should invest in certain pieces of equipment.”

But she said the agency is wrong to try and favor industry over the need to protect the public and the environment.

“One thing that’s been so frustrating with so many proposals that come out of this administration is the EPA is public health agency,” McCabe said. “But that’s not what you read in these proposals. You read about regulatory relief to business and a real minimizing of the evaluation of the effects they would have on public health.”

Last updated at 1:06 p.m.

Houston Chronicle

<https://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/EPA-will-rollback-methane-regulations-sources-say-14398837.php>

EPA proposes rollback of methane regulations

By James Osborne

The Trump administration will roll back Obama-era regulations limiting emissions of the potent greenhouse gas methane from oil and gas wells, even as many within the industry have set reducing those emissions as a goal in fighting climate change.

Under a proposed rule change announced by the Environmental Protection Agency Thursday, oil and gas companies would no longer be required to inspect for methane leaks from existing wells, storage tanks, pipelines and other infrastructure.

EPA Administrator Andrew said the action, “removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry.”

“The Trump Administration recognizes that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use,” he added.

U.S. methane emissions have been steadily falling since the 1990s, as oil and gas companies work to minimize losses of natural gas during both oil and gas production through equipment leaks or improperly drilled wells. But considering methane’s outsized role in global warming — it’s 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide — the Obama administration reasoned the industry needed to move faster.

The move Thursday marks the latest effort by President Donald Trump to pull back regulations designed to fight climate change, which scientists predict will grow increasingly severe in the decades ahead without a drastic reduction in global emissions.

Already environmental groups are preparing lawsuits, likely setting up a years long legal fight over the federal government’s obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“The Trump EPA is eager to give the oil and gas industry a free pass to keep leaking enormous amounts of climate pollution into the air,” said David Doniger, an attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council. “If EPA moves forward with this reckless and sinister proposal, we will see them in court.”

Methane remains a divisive topic within the oil and gas industry, with larger companies including Exxon Mobil, BP and Royal Dutch Shell voluntarily pledging to reduce methane emissions in the decade ahead.

Both BP and Shell released statements Thursday questioning the decision to roll back methane regulations.

“BP has been clear in its position that EPA should directly regulate methane emissions from new and existing sources. We believe this is the most effective way to protect the environment and maximize the benefits of natural gas,” said BP America Chairman Susan Dio.

But for smaller oil companies, many of which count fewer than a dozen employees, the requirement that they inspect individual wells with infrared cameras is too onerous, said Lee Fuller, vice president of government affairs at the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

Most affected are so-called stripper wells, which produce less than 10 barrels of crude a day and make up about 80 percent of U.S. wells, he added.

“[Obama’s rule] threatens to shut down all those wells,” Fuller said, “and that’s clearly been the goal of the environmental community through this process.”

For the tens of thousands of new oil and gas wells drilled or modified each year, not much is expected to change — at least for now.

A 2012 rule designed to reduce ozone pollution remains on the books, requiring drillers seek out escaping natural gas - the primary component of which is methane - and either store it or flare it.

“Eventually that’s going to get everything,” said Erik Milito, a vice president at the American Petroleum Institute. “It makes more sense instead of blanketing everything when a lot of those [existing] wells are going to go out of production anyway.”

The EPA is currently at work on amending those ozone regulations too, as oil lobbyists argue the required inspections are too frequent and don’t allow them to survey large numbers of well at once with drones or other airborne craft equipped with methane detectors.

Huffington Post

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-methane-epa-rule_n_5d67bd65e4b063c341fbba0e

Trump Administration To Undo Limits On Methane, Ignoring Environmental Concerns

By Nina Golgowski

President Donald Trump’s administration on Thursday reportedly plans to roll back regulation of methane emissions by the oil and gas industry — a major contributor to climate change.

The proposed rule change reflects the Trump administration view that the government overstepped its authority with mandates during the Obama administration that oil and gas companies take steps to repair methane leaks, according to The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the rollback.

“The purpose of this rule is to get to the fundamental basis of whether [methane] should have been regulated in the first place,” Anne Idsal, the acting assistant administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Air and Radiation, told the Journal. “It’s not about whether we’re doing the maximum we can or should do to deal with” climate change.

Idsal added that she doesn’t believe “that there’s going to be some big climate concern here.”

Many others — including some oil and gas companies — would disagree.

“This is extraordinarily harmful,” Rachel Kyte, the United Nations special representative on sustainable energy, told The New York Times. “Just at a time when the federal government’s job should be to help localities and states move faster toward cleaner energy and a cleaner economy, just at that moment when speed and scale is what’s at stake, the government is walking off the field.”

The primary component of natural gas is methane, which is odorless when it comes directly out of the gas well.

Oil companies, including Shell, Exxon and BP America, have urged Trump’s administration to maintain or tighten methane regulations — not loosen them, according to the Times.

Other industrial companies have opposed other Trump rollbacks of environmental regulations, including those aimed at curbing pollutants like mercury and auto emissions.

By easing regulations, the Trump administration hopes to boost crude oil and natural gas production, according to the Journal.

Kassie Siegel, director of the Climate Law Institute at the Center for Biological Diversity, slammed the methane rollback as “reckless” and evidence of “complete contempt for our climate” by Trump and his administration.

“The EPA is now so determined to actually increase greenhouse pollution that it’s even shrugging off concerns from oil and gas companies about gutting these protections,” Siegel told The Washington Post. “Fracked gas is a climate killer, and Trump’s rash embrace of this dirty stuff showcases the need for the next president to commit to a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels.”

Los Angeles Times

<https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2019-08-29/epa-trump-methane-emissions>

EPA plans to abandon regulations on methane emissions, reports say

By Alexa Diaz

The Trump Administration is expected to announce a proposal to ease methane emission regulations in the oil and gas sector on Thursday, according to reports by the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times.

The Environmental Protection Agency will reportedly propose abandoning federal rules that require the oil and gas industry to install technology that monitors and curbs methane leaks in wells, pipelines and other operational facilities. Some major oil and gas companies have opposed the rollback.

Methane is the core component of natural gas and its emissions are a known accelerator of global warming. Leaks that release the powerful greenhouse gas — one that is several times more harmful than carbon dioxide and traps more heat — into the atmosphere have long been a major concern of environmental groups for their plant-warming effects. The proposal marks President Trump’s latest effort to dismantle Obama-era environmental regulations that were put in place to confront climate change.

The rule would require a period of public comment and review, and would likely be finalized early next year, the New York Times reported.

New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/29/climate/epa-methane-greenhouse-gas.html>

E.P.A. to Roll Back Regulations on Methane, a Potent Greenhouse Gas

By Lisa Friedman and Coral Davenport

The Trump administration laid out on Thursday a far-reaching plan to cut back on the regulation of methane emissions, a major contributor to climate change.

The Environmental Protection Agency, in its proposed rule, aims to eliminate federal requirements that oil and gas companies install technology to detect and fix methane leaks from wells, pipelines and storage facilities. It will also reopen the question of whether the E.P.A. even has the legal authority to regulate methane as a pollutant.

The rollback is particularly notable because major energy companies have, in fact, spoken out against it — joining the ranks of automakers, electric utilities and other industrial giants that have opposed other administration initiatives to dismantle climate-change and environmental rules. Several of the world's largest auto companies are pushing back against President Trump's plans to let vehicles pollute more, and utilities have opposed the relaxation of restrictions on toxic mercury pollution from coal-burning power plants.

E.P.A. officials said the new rule is a response to Mr. Trump's calls to trim or eliminate regulations that impede economic growth or keep the nation reliant on energy imports.

The plan "delivers on President Trump's executive order and removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry," said the E.P.A. administrator, Andrew Wheeler. "The Trump administration recognizes that methane is valuable and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use."

Mr. Wheeler noted that since 1990, natural gas production in the United States has almost doubled while methane emissions across the industry has fallen 15 percent.

Anne Idsal, the agency's acting senior clean-air official, said the rules being eliminated have "minimal environmental benefits."

Environmental advocates described the proposal as a major setback in the effort to fight climate change. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas.

"The Trump E.P.A. is eager to give the oil and gas industry a free pass to keep leaking enormous amounts of climate pollution into the air," said David Doniger, a lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council, an advocacy group. "If E.P.A. moves forward with this reckless and sinister proposal, we will see them in court."

Under the proposal, methane, the main component of natural gas, would be only indirectly regulated. A separate but related category of gases, known as volatile organic compounds, would remain regulated under the new rule, and those curbs would have the side benefit of averting some methane emissions.

The new rule must go through a period of public comment and review, and would most likely be finalized early next year, analysts said.

Over all, carbon dioxide is the most significant greenhouse gas, but methane is a close second. It lingers in the atmosphere for a shorter period of time but packs a bigger punch while it lasts. By some estimates, methane has 80 times the heating-trapping power of carbon dioxide in the first 20 years in the atmosphere.

Methane currently makes up nearly 10 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. A significant portion of that comes from the oil and gas industry. Other sources include cattle and agriculture.

The E.P.A.'s economic analysis of the rule estimates that it would save the oil and natural gas industry \$17 to \$19 million a year. For comparison, the annual revenue of the United States oil industry as a whole typically ranges between \$100 billion and \$150 billion.

The methane regulation has been in the administration's cross hairs since Mr. Trump's earliest days in office. In March 2017, Scott Pruitt, then the E.P.A. administrator, tried to suspend the regulation while the agency considered an alternative, but a federal appeals court ruled the move unlawful.

Erik Milito, a vice president at the American Petroleum Institute, a trade group representing the oil and gas industry, praised the new rule, saying, "We think it's a smarter way of targeting methane emissions."

Smaller oil and gas companies have complained to the Trump administration about the Obama rule, saying it is too costly for them to perform leak inspections. But major oil and gas companies have called on the Trump administration to tighten restrictions on methane.

The larger companies have invested millions of dollars to promote natural gas — which produces about half as much carbon dioxide as coal — as a cleaner option than coal in the nation's power plants. They fear that unrestricted leaks of methane could undermine that marketing message, hurting demand.

Exxon wrote to the E.P.A. last year urging the agency to maintain core elements of the Obama-era policy. And earlier this year Gretchen Watkins, the United States chairwoman for Shell, said the E.P.A. should impose rules "that will both regulate existing methane emissions but also future methane emissions."

Susan Dio, the chairwoman and president of BP America, wrote an op-ed article in March saying that regulating methane is the "right thing to do for the planet" and for the natural gas industry. "To maximize the climate benefits of gas — and meet the dual challenge of producing more energy with fewer emissions — we need to address its Achilles' heel and eliminate methane emissions," she wrote.

Ben Ratner, a senior director with the Environmental Defense Fund, a group that works closely with oil companies to track and reduce methane emissions, said that as renewable energy becomes more affordable, it could undercut the industry message that natural gas is a cleaner energy source. "The reputation of American natural gas is at the precipice, and methane rollbacks are the shove," Mr. Ratner said.

Ms. Isdal, the E.P.A.'s acting clean-air chief, said companies that opposed the Trump rollback would be free to keep abiding by the Obama-era rules if they wished. "We don't preclude anybody from going above and beyond if that's what they think they need to do from a business or compliance standpoint," she said.

Newsweek

<https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-climate-change-epa-methane-1456824>

Trump Administration Rolls Back Greenhouse Gas Regulations So Far Even Oil Companies Object

By Nicole Goodkind

Just two days after President Donald Trump called himself an "environmentalist," his administration announced a rollback of methane gas emissions regulations so large that even oil companies are objecting to the change.

In the proposed rule change, released by the Environmental Protection Agency Thursday morning, the agency would end a federal regulation that requires gas and oil companies to use technology to inspect for and repair methane leaks in their infrastructure. This would leave large segments of the oil and gas industry entirely uncontrolled with no pollution limits. Methane emissions are known to cause climate change.

The administration estimates that the rollbacks will save the oil and gas industry \$17 to 19 million a year.

But oil and gas bigwigs don't support the change. Susan Dio, the chairwoman and president of BP America, wrote an opinion piece for the Houston Chronicle in March where she claimed it was essential that the EPA regulate methane gasses.

"It's the right thing to do for the planet," she wrote. "The best way to help further reduce and ultimately eliminate methane emissions industry wide is through direct federal regulation of new and existing sources."

ExxonMobil wrote a letter to the EPA last year, asking them to keep methane regulations intact, and Gretchen Watkins, the U.S. chairwoman for Shell, said in March that the EPA should keep rules in place to regulate methane production.

A lot of these executives are focused on regulating future emissions of methane. That's because red tape, or regulatory rules, often work to benefit larger, long standing companies who have the money and infrastructure to abide by them. They work as a natural barrier to keep new upstarts out of the industry. These companies have already spent significant funds putting technology in place to lower their emissions and even more money convincing the American company that natural gas is a good, clean energy alternative.

The administration's new rule change could hurt the entire industry. "The reputation of American natural gas is at the precipice, and methane rollbacks are the shove," Ben Ratner, a senior director with the Environmental Defense Fund, told The New York Times.

But it's likely that smaller companies, however, will benefit, at least temporarily, from this particular rollback. Lee Fuller, executive vice president of the Independent Petroleum Association of America, told the *Times* that while it's easier for large companies to deal with federal regulations simply because they have the money to do so, ordinarily "for these small businesses, it's a very different economic impact." But the level-field and barriers to entry will now be a bit more even for companies who can't afford large infrastructure or technological changes.

"This proposal is a blatant attempt to give oil and gas companies yet another free pass to release as much harmful air pollution as they want while the public pays the price," Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said in an emailed statement. The cost of climate change is expected to cost the U.S. about \$224 billion more per year by 2090, according to Trump's own EPA.

Methane is the second largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., after carbon dioxide. Methane makes up about 10 percent of all greenhouse emissions coming out of the country, but initially has about 86 times more power to trap heat in the atmosphere than CO₂.

Politico

<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/08/29/methane-pollution-rule-trump-administration-1692262>

Trump administration to seek rollback of methane pollution rule

By Alex Guillen and Ben Lefebvre

The Trump administration will seek to roll back rules limiting methane pollution from oil and gas production, gutting a regulation put in place under President Barack Obama that was designed to curb emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas.

The move is the latest by the Trump administration to eliminate rules designed to fight climate change despite the rising temperatures that saw July set a record as the hottest month on the books, as Arctic ice melting accelerates and forest fires rage around the globe.

The new proposal set to be released on Thursday by the Environmental Protection Agency is also notable in that it is opposed by many oil and gas producers that is designed to help by easing requirements on leaks of methane, the main component of natural gas, from their oil and gas equipment.

Most global oil and gas companies have requested EPA slow its deregulatory efforts. Major oil companies have promoted natural gas as a clean-burning fuel that can compete with renewable energy sources, and the large companies such as Exxon Mobil and Shell have already launched major efforts to eliminate methane leaks.

"At a time when the oil and gas industry is suffering severe reputation problems, this could be the final blow to the viability of natural gas having any role in the transition to a clean energy economy," said Matt Watson, vice president of energy programs at Environmental Defense Fund, which works with companies in the industry to bring their methane emissions down.

Bottom of Form

“You have these companies that are looking out in the future and wondering what their business model is going to be, and they understand the viability of their product is in question and they’re in trouble,” he added.

The proposal, which was first reported by the Wall Street Journal, would effectively undo a rule issued by the Obama administration in 2016 that directly regulated methane from newly built oil and gas wells and other production facilities. Methane is a particularly potent greenhouse gas, one that the industry has sometimes struggled to contain in the pipelines and well sites that have popped up during the shale gas boom.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler previewed Thursday’s action in May.

EPA had previously set rules for well emissions of volatile organic compounds, a class of hazardous pollutant whose pollution controls also helped curb methane emissions. But environmentalists said direct regulation of methane was necessary to effectively control a leading source of greenhouse gases, particularly as U.S. natural gas production skyrocketed over the past decade.

The existing 2016 rule’s methane requirements applied only to newly built wells, but would have eventually required EPA to regulate the hundreds of thousands of existing wells already drilled around the U.S. The Obama administration had taken early steps toward such a regulation, but former Administrator Scott Pruitt halted that work soon after arriving at EPA in 2017.

The EPA’s stance has split the oil and gas industry. Smaller companies complained that the rules impaired their bottom lines. The American Petroleum Institute, a trade association representing the industry, formed a voluntary group of member companies to share best practices to reduce their emissions.

But executives from Shell, BP and Equinor had asked the administration to forgo the rollback, both publicly and in meetings with White House officials. That included most recently talks with the Office of Management and Budget, according to an industry source.

Shell’s top executive in the U.S., Gretchen Watkins, said the company would continue efforts to bring its global methane emissions intensity below 0.2 percent by 2025 and cut its net carbon footprint by half by 2050.

“Despite the Administration’s proposal to no longer regulate methane, Shell’s U.S. assets will continue to contribute to that global target,” Gretchen said in a statement to POLITICO. “While the law may change in this instance, our environmental commitments will stand.”

Earthjustice attorney Tim Ballo said the environmental group will sue EPA to keep the standards in place once the change is finalized, likely next year.

“The Trump administration is once again putting industry interests over people and public health by gutting these common-sense emission standards,” he said. “The rollback would only further exacerbate a climate crisis that is already near a point of no return. We cannot afford to go back.”

In 2017, oil and gas sector methane emissions topped 200 million tons of CO₂-equivalent, the same as running 52 coal power plants for a year, according to EPA data.

The oil and gas industry has touted its voluntary efforts to reduce methane pollution. Between 1990 and 2017, natural gas and oil producers reduced their emissions by 13.5 percent while increasing production by more than 50 percent, according to EPA and Energy Information Administration data.

But methane remains a potent driver of near-term warming. And when released via oil and gas production, it is often accompanied by volatile organic compounds, a group of carcinogens and neurotoxins that also help form smog.

The Interior Department has also moved to lift methane restrictions on the oil and gas sector.

Interior already repealed its own "venting and flaring" rule that required oil and gas producers on public lands to capture more of their methane rather than allow it to leak or burn it off in the atmosphere. That rule would have had a more limited impact since it only covered wells on federal lands, while EPA's rule also applied to new wells on private lands.

Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-climate-methane/trump-epa-proposes-easing-methane-limits-at-oil-and-gas-operations-idUSKCN1VJ1IU>

Trump EPA proposes easing methane limits at oil and gas operations

By Tim Gardner

The Trump administration on Thursday proposed rescinding Obama-era limits on oil and gas industry emissions of methane, one of the main pollutants scientists link to climate change.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that easing a 2016 regulation that specifically targeted methane emissions from oil and gas wells, pipelines and storage would save energy companies up to \$123 million through 2025. The plan will undergo a period of public comment before being finalized, and environmental groups pledged court action to try to block repeal of the limits.

The proposal "removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry," EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said.

The EPA said it will keep rules issued in 2012 that limit emissions known as volatile organic compounds that cause smog and also control methane emissions. Anne Idsal, acting assistant administrator for air and radiation at EPA told reporters she expects methane emissions to fall in coming years due to the 2012 rule and because energy companies have an incentive to minimize leaks of methane, which has value as the main component of natural gas.

Environmentalists say energy companies do not always do enough to control leaks, partially because low prices resulting from a natural gas glut sometimes make it cheaper to release the methane.

Some large energy companies including BP favor federal regulation of methane, saying the regulatory certainty is preferable to a patchwork of varying rules by states and legal challenges by environmentalists. BP has said it is already taking steps to limit methane emissions.

The move is President Donald Trump's latest easing of rules designed to curb greenhouse gas emissions, including many put forth by his predecessor, President Barack Obama. Trump, who insists he is an environmentalist, has also relaxed rules on carbon emissions from vehicles and intends to withdraw the United States from the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change.

Concern about climate has spiked amid fires in the Arctic and the Amazon rainforest, the melting of ice in Greenland, and as Hurricane Dorian threatened Florida. Democrats seeking their party's nomination in the 2020 U.S. presidential election will participate in a series of town halls on climate next week.

SEE THEM IN COURTIn 2016, Obama's EPA issued the first rule specifically limiting methane emissions from new oil and gas fracking operations including transport equipment. Thursday's proposal would rescind that and specific regulations on existing sources of methane.

The oil and gas business is the largest single source of methane emissions, a major factor in global warming. The gas has more than 80 times the heat-trapping potential of carbon dioxide in the first 20 years after it escapes into the atmosphere, scientists say.

Susan Dio, chairman and president of BP America, supported federal regulation of methane in an opinion piece in the Houston Chronicle this year calling it the "the best way to help further reduce and ultimately eliminate methane emissions industrywide."

Exxon Mobil also supports federal regulation of methane from oil and gas sources. "We will continue to urge the EPA to retain the main features of the existing methane rule," a company official said.

The EPA said some smaller energy companies had a hard time complying with the costs of the rules.

Environmentalists vowed to sue the administration. "We simply cannot protect our children and grandchildren from climate catastrophe if EPA lets this industry off scot-free," said David Doniger, a climate and clean energy specialist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "If EPA moves forward with this reckless and sinister proposal, we will see them in court."

S&P Global

<https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/082919-epas-proposed-rollback-of-methane-regulations-to-impact-marginal-oil-gas-wells>

EPA's proposed rollback of methane regulations to impact marginal oil, gas wells

By Brian Scheid

The Trump administration on Thursday unveiled its proposal to formally rescind federal regulations aimed at limiting methane emissions from oil and gas operations, an effort expected to most impact production from marginal US wells, accounting for roughly one-tenth of domestic oil and gas output.

The US Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday the proposal was eliminating "unnecessary regulatory duplication" created by methane rules finalized in 2016 by the Obama-era EPA.

Analysts said Thursday that the direct impact on US oil and gas production from the rollback was unclear, but an estimated 770,000 low-production wells were at risk of shutdown due to the relatively high costs of methane emissions requirements, according Lee Fuller, an executive vice president with the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

"The impact is more related to the premature loss of existing production," Fuller said Thursday.

Marginal wells, also known as stripper wells, are characterized as producing no more than 15 boe/d over a 12-month period. These wells are often located outside the nation's more prolific shale plays and account for roughly 10% of US oil production and 11% of US gas production, according to the US Energy Information Administration's latest data.

Oil and gas majors, including ExxonMobil, Shell and BP, had pressed the Trump administration to continue to regulate methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, but smaller operators saw the regulations as prohibitively expensive.

"These small business wells are the most economically sensitive in the United States and are already facing economic challenges due to low commodity prices," IPAA said in a statement Thursday.

EPA said Thursday that its proposed rollback will save the US oil and gas industry \$17 million to \$19 million a year through 2025.

Environmental groups are expected to challenge the proposed rollback.

"The Trump EPA is eager to give the oil and gas industry a free pass to keep leaking enormous amounts of climate pollution into the air," said David Doniger, a senior strategic director with the Natural Resources Defense Council. "If EPA moves forward with this reckless and sinister proposal, we will see them in court."

In a statement, Mark Watson, a vice president with the Environmental Defense Fund, call the proposal "an attempt to dodge the agency's legal duty to regulate existing sources in the oil and gas sector."

Nearly a year ago, the Interior Department finalized a rule rolling back some of the requirements for methane emissions from oil and gas operations on federal lands. Environmental groups have sued Interior claiming the agency illegally rescinded these requirements.

SOURCES, INTERPRETATIONS

EPA's proposal unveiled Thursday has multiple parts, but largely defers regulation on methane emissions to states.

First, it proposes removing transmission compressor stations, pneumatic controllers, and underground storage vessels from federal regulation.

"The agency is proposing that the addition of these sources to the 2016 rule was not appropriate, noting that the agency did not make a separate finding to determine that the emissions from the transmission and storage segment of the industry causes or significantly contributes to air pollution that may endanger public health or welfare," EPA said in a statement.

Second, the EPA proposes rescinding methane emissions limits from the production and processing segments of the oil and gas industry, including well completions, pneumatic pumps and controllers, gathering and boosting compressors, natural gas processing plants and storage tanks. EPA would maintain emissions limits for volatile organic compounds, also known as VOCs, instead.

"The controls to reduce VOCs emissions also reduce methane at the same time, so separate methane limitations for that segment of the industry are redundant," EPA said.

EPA is also proposing an alternative which would rescind the methane emissions limits, but would not remove transmission and storage sources from regulation and is considering alternative interpretations of the agency's authority to regulate pollutants under the Clean Air Act, the agency said.

U.S. News & World Report

<https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2019-08-29/trumps-epa-proposes-roll-back-on-methane-emissions-regulations>

EPA Proposes Rollback on Methane Emissions Regulations

By Cecelia Smith-Schoenwalder

THE ENVIRONMENTAL Protection Agency on Thursday announced a plan that will weaken regulations of methane emissions.

The proposed rule would lessen federal requirements for technology that monitors methane leaks from the oil and gas industry, which is the largest methane emissions source in the country. According to the EPA, the proposal will save the oil and gas industry \$17 to \$19 million a year.

Methane, which is the principal component of natural gas, can be released into the atmosphere through pipeline and storage facility leaks.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler argued that because methane is valuable to the oil and gas sector, companies already have an incentive to stop leaks.

Methane is a greenhouse gas, which means it absorbs heat from the sun and warms the atmosphere. Behind carbon dioxide, it is the second largest contributor to climate change. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, it is responsible for 25% of the warming the Earth is currently experiencing.

Acting Assistant Administrator for the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation Anne Idsal said that the proposal would get rid of "inappropriate regulatory duplications" from the Obama administration that have "just minimal environmental benefits."

The agency previously tried to target the 2016 performance standards rule by proposing to halt its enforcement while it was considering repealing or replacing it, but a federal court stopped the effort.

The American Petroleum Institute said the industry will continue to be "effectively regulated" under the proposal.

"The oil and natural gas industry is laser-focused on cutting methane emissions through industry initiatives, smart regulations, new technologies, and best practices," API's Vice President of Upstream and Industry Operations Erik Milito, said in a statement. He added that continued regulation of volatile organic compounds will also help keep methane emissions down.

However, Shell and other major oil and natural gas companies have indicated they support federal regulation of methane emissions. Shell U.S. President Gretchen Watkins told The Washington Post on Thursday that the company will stick to its own plan to lessen methane leaks.

"We believe sound environmental policies are foundational to the vital role natural gas can play in the energy transition and have made clear our support of 2016 law to regulate methane from new and modified onshore sources," Watkins said. "Despite the administration's proposal to no longer regulate methane, Shell's U.S. assets will continue to contribute to that global target."

Idsal said the proposal will also affect small and mid-size companies and added that the agency does not stop anyone from "going above and beyond" the regulations.

The proposal angered green groups, which called it a "free pass" to oil and gas companies.

"This proposal is a blatant attempt to give oil and gas companies yet another free pass to release as much harmful air pollution as they want while the public pays the price," Michael Brune, the executive director of the Sierra Club, said in a statement.

The Natural Resources Defense Council threatened to sue.

"The Trump EPA is eager to give the oil and gas industry a free pass to keep leaking enormous amounts of climate pollution into the air," David Doniger, senior strategic director of climate and clean energy at the council said in a statement. "We simply cannot protect our children and grandchildren from climate catastrophe if EPA lets this industry off scot-free. If EPA moves forward with this reckless and sinister proposal, we will see them in court."

Once the proposed rule is published in the Federal Register, the public will have 60 days to comment. The agency will also hold a public hearing on the proposal in Texas, though that date has not been set.

Vice News

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/j5ym38/the-epa-is-deregulating-one-of-the-most-climate-destroying-greenhouse-gases

The EPA Is Deregulating One of the Most Climate-Destroying Greenhouse Gases

By Brendan O'Connor

The world is on fire, all the ice is melting, and the Trump administration wants to turn up the heat.

On Thursday, the Wall Street Journal reported, the Environmental Protection Agency will announce a new plan to deregulate methane emissions by the fossil fuel industry. The EPA's plan continues the rollback of moderate Obama-era

policies, eliminating requirements that the industry monitor and limit methane leaks from newly constructed wells, tanks, and pipelines; it would also pause efforts to regulate existing sites.

While methane, the primary ingredient in natural gas, only accounts for 10 percent of U.S. greenhouse emissions, it is around 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide, meaning that it heats the atmosphere significantly more quickly than CO₂. (Some scientific estimates indicate that it is about 80 times more potent than CO₂ in the two decades after it first enters the air, though it doesn't stick around as long.) According to the American Meteorological Society, record levels of greenhouse gases were released in 2018, and a NASA study released in January found that the contribution of fracking to a recent spike in methane levels was "substantially larger" than previously thought; likewise, a Cornell University study released earlier this month found the "chemical fingerprints" of fracking all over the methane spike.

Not that any of this has deterred the Trump administration. "The purpose of this rule is to get to the fundamental basis of whether [methane] should have been regulated in the first place," Anne Idsal, the acting assistant administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Air and Radiation, told the Journal. "It's not about whether we're doing the maximum we can or should do to deal with" climate change, she continued. "I don't see that there's going to be some big climate concern here."

And why would she? In 2017, Idsal, who comes from a very well-connected political family in Texas, told the Texas Observer that the climate "has been changing since the dawn of time, well before humans ever inhabited the Earth." It's possible that human activity has had "some type of impact on climate change," she said. "I just don't know the extent of that." In this, she was echoing Andrew Wheeler, current head of the EPA and a former lobbyist for Murray Energy, the largest private coal company in the country. "I believe that man has an impact on the climate, but what's not completely understood is what the impact is," he said during his confirmation hearing.

The industry response to the Trump administration's methane deregulation has been mixed. Massive lobbying groups like the American Petroleum Institute and smaller oil and gas companies welcome the change, the New York Times reported, while large companies like Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, and BP are more ambivalent—likely not out of any great concern for the millions of people displaced by rising sea levels, droughts, and rampant wildfires, but rather out of fear that deregulation could undermine efforts to market methane and natural gas as a cleaner energy source than coal or oil. How very humanitarian of them.

The Wall Street Journal

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/energy-companies-set-to-get-relieve-on-methane-rules-11567051201?mod=rsswn>

Energy Companies Set to Get Reprieve on Methane Rules

By Tim Puko

The Trump administration is moving to erase Obama-era rules on methane emissions from the oil-and-gas business, saying the federal government overstepped its authority when it set limits on what scientists say is a significant contributor to climate change.

The sweeping proposal, formally introduced Wednesday, is the administration's latest attempt to further boost record crude-oil and natural-gas production by easing regulations. But it comes amid growing concerns over how the industry's methane emissions are affecting the climate and stark divisions among companies over whether to regulate them.

"The purpose of this rule is to get to the fundamental basis of whether [methane] should have been regulated in the first place," said Anne Idsal, the acting assistant administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Air and Radiation, referring to the proposed rollback. "It's not about whether we're doing the maximum we can or should do to deal with" climate change.

"I don't see that there's going to be some big climate concern here," Ms. Idsal added.

The vast majority of climate research identifies human-caused emissions as the primary driver of climate change, most commonly through carbon-dioxide emissions from sources including factories, planes and cars. But methane, which accounts for about 10% of U.S. greenhouse-gas emissions, is about 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide in trapping the earth's heat, according to estimates used by the EPA. Its figures show the oil-and-gas industry has long been the nation's largest emitter of methane, even before discoveries in shale and fracking led to a wave of new drilling.

The proposed plan would do away with Obama-era requirements for the industry to install technologies that monitor and limit leaks from new wells, tanks and pipeline networks and to more frequently inspect for leaks.

It would also forestall legal requirements that would have forced the EPA to set rules on emissions from thousands of pre-existing wells and industry sites.

Some companies have asked for the rollback, while others, including Exxon Mobil Corp. and Royal Dutch Shell PLC, have warned the Trump administration that a lack of government-backed minimum requirements to curb emissions could undermine the argument that natural gas is a cleaner fuel. They also say legal wrangling could lead to years of uncertainty before deregulation would lower costs.

The American Petroleum Institute, which represents hundreds of companies, has diverged from those major producers and has pressed the administration to stop the direct regulation of methane emissions. It has instead touted a voluntary program under which companies commit to more inspections and to replacing or retrofitting old control systems.

Both API and EPA officials say the industry has an incentive to limit emissions because it can sell the gas it traps. They note the industry's methane emissions, by EPA calculations, have ticked down in recent years even as oil-and-gas production has skyrocketed.

"Nothing stops [companies] from taking whatever voluntary measures they think is appropriate to deal with those concerns," Ms. Idsal said. "Our job at the EPA is to regulate in a legally and scientifically responsible manner."

President Trump has called climate change a hoax. His appointees say the Clean Air Act is limited in the authority it gives to set climate policy. The new proposal is a win for business interests that have lobbied to curb such federal authority.

The proposal's publication in the Federal Register starts the clock on a 60-day public-comment period, which then would likely be followed by a lengthy Trump administration review. The administration aims to finalize the rules in 2020, the last year of Mr. Trump's term.

The proposed rollback is likely to draw protests from environmental groups and will probably face legal challenges, opening the door to years of uncertainty about if and how the government will regulate methane.

Methane is the primary component of natural gas, which is rising in use globally to heat homes and fuel power plants. It burns more cleanly than coal and oil but can be harder to control. The production and transport of methane involves millions of miles of pipelines, and the gas often leaks through the network's innumerable joints and vents. That adds methane to the heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere.

Before it is burned, methane is so potent that the Environmental Defense Fund, a nonprofit that often collaborates with industry partners, estimates its emissions cause about a quarter of the planet's warming even though by volume it represents only about 15% of all greenhouse-gas emissions, according to EPA figures. A Wall Street Journal analysis recently found the U.S. oil-and-gas industry's methane emissions alone were the equivalent to the greenhouse-gas emissions from more than 69 million cars, or about one-fourth of all cars registered in the U.S.

The industry leaks about 2.3% of all the natural gas it produces, according to a series of studies finished last year and led by the Environmental Defense Fund. It suggested initial efforts to study methane emissions had far underestimated them by missing large, unplanned leaks, especially from storage tanks and processing plants. At that rate, these

emissions would largely negate any climate benefits from an ongoing shift to gas as a replacement for carbon-intensive energy from coal, according to the analysis.

“Without nationwide methane regulation, industry is only as strong as its weakest link,” Ben Ratner, a senior director who works with companies on methane reduction at the Environmental Defense Fund, wrote in a March blog post advocating for federal regulation.

The Trump administration proposal would remove storage tanks, pipelines and other transmission infrastructure from any greenhouse-gas regulation.

EPA policy has long classified them as a separate business from oil-and-gas production, the proposal says. The Trump administration claims its predecessors erred in evaluating and regulating production and transmission together. Once separated, neither branch of the oil industry produces enough methane emissions on its own to merit federal oversight, administration officials said.

The EPA does plan to keep requirements at new production sites to cut emissions of volatile organic compounds—smog-forming pollutants. While the agency doesn’t have exact estimates, officials expect limits on those compounds would also help reduce the vast majority of methane emissions at drilling sites, Ms. Idsal said. “Separate methane limitations for these segments of the industry are redundant,” the proposal says.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/daily-on-energy-epa-wont-regulate-methane-in-latest-obama-climate-regulation-rollback>

Daily on Energy: EPA won’t regulate methane in latest Obama climate regulation rollback

By Josh Siegel

EPA WON’T REGULATE METHANE IN LATEST OBAMA CLIMATE REGULATION ROLLBACK: The Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule Thursday that would eliminate the direct federal regulation of methane emissions from oil and gas operations, a major rollback of an Obama administration policy to combat climate change.

Methane, the main component of natural gas, is more potent than carbon dioxide, although its emissions don’t last as long in the atmosphere.

Methane currently makes up nearly 10% of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., a significant portion of which comes from leaks of methane that occur in the drilling, transport, and storage of natural gas.

What the rule does: The Trump administration rule would reverse regulations imposed by the Obama administration in 2016 requiring oil and gas companies to install technologies to inspect and repair wells, pipelines, and storage facilities that leak methane, which can happen purposely or accidentally during the production and transmission of gas.

It would keep emissions limits for a related category of pollutants from gas called volatile organic compounds, which could prevent some methane emissions. The regulation applies to new oil and gas equipment, but it also precludes the EPA from regulating existing sources.

EPA says its proposal would save the oil and natural gas industry \$17 to \$19 million a year from 2019 through 2025.

“This is a very important step for removing inappropriate regulatory duplication,” said Anne Idsal, the acting assistant administrator for the EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation, in a press call with reporters.

Some major companies don’t want this: The move is likely to split the oil and gas industry, with some major companies warning the Trump administration that limiting federal oversight over methane leaks damage the industry’s attempt to sell gas as a “fuel of the future” rather than one that is phased out over coming decades as part of aggressive climate change regulations.

Some individual companies, such as Shell, BP, and Exxon have urged the EPA to keep Obama-era regulations targeting methane leaks, instead of weakening them.

But the oil and gas industry's main trade group, the American Petroleum Institute, favors less direct federal regulation over methane, and prefers voluntary initiatives to limit leaks, arguing the industry is self-motivated to control methane emissions because leaks remove product that can be sold for profit.

"The oil and natural gas industry is laser-focused on cutting methane emissions through industry initiatives, smart regulations, new technologies, and best practices," said Erik Milito, API's vice president of upstream and industry operations.

API released its first progress report last month on a voluntary program it started with 27 oil and gas companies in 2017 called The Environmental Partnership, finding that companies conducted more than 156,000 leak surveys in 2018 across more than 78,000 production sites, finding a "leak rate" of only 0.16%.

The problem with voluntary actions: But studies have shown leak rates — which are tricky to measure given methane is invisible to the naked eye — are higher than federal estimates.

A study from the journal Science last year found methane from oil and gas was leaking at a 2.3% rate, with emissions 60% higher than previous EPA estimates.

Groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund that cooperate with industry to invest in technological research to better detect methane leaks say the current voluntary approach is insufficient. Ben Ratner, an EDF senior director who studies methane, told me that API's voluntary program includes only 1% of America's oil and gas producers, although they represent a larger amount of market share given the participation of larger companies.

"This methane rollback shows the administration is catering to the worst actors in industry who aren't willing to lift a finger to make a reduction in their emissions," Ratner said. "The problem is the industry is only as strong as its weakest link. There is such fragmentation in America's oil and gas industry right now, and without a level playing field and requirements in bringing everyone along, the problem won't be solved."

Ratner disagrees with API's argument that a federal regulation would disadvantage smaller companies that don't have expertise in limiting methane leaks, but benefit from information-sharing for techniques to reduce emissions through voluntary programs.

"It's absurd to think America's rugged small oil and gas producers can withstand the boom and bust cycle, but not afford twice a year inspections of their facilities," he said. "It doesn't add up."

Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2019/08/29/trump-administration-reverse-limits-methane-powerful-greenhouse-gas/>

Trump administration to reverse limits on methane, a powerful greenhouse gas

By Juliet Eilperin and Brady Dennis

The Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday that it plans to loosen federal rules on methane, a powerful greenhouse gas linked to climate change.

The proposed rule would reverse standards enacted under President Barack Obama that required oil and gas operators to prevent the release of methane in new drilling wells, pipelines and storage facilities. It also challenges the notion that the federal government has the authority to regulate methane without first making a detailed determination that it qualifies as a pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

If successful, that change could hamper the ability of future administrations to enact tougher restrictions on methane. Already, the Trump administration has taken several steps to limit the government's ability to regulate other greenhouse gases in the future, including in a recently finalized rule curbing carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

"EPA's proposal delivers on President Trump's executive order and removes unnecessary and duplicative regulatory burdens from the oil and gas industry," EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a statement. "The Trump administration recognizes that methane is valuable, and the industry has an incentive to minimize leaks and maximize its use."

Methane is a significant contributor to the world's greenhouse gas emissions, though it is shorter-lived than carbon dioxide and is not emitted in amounts as large. It often is leaked as companies drill for gas and transport it across the country, and methane emissions are more than 80 times as potent as carbon dioxide emissions over the short term.

Scientists have projected that the world needs to cut its overall greenhouse gas emissions nearly in half by mid-century to avert catastrophic effects from global warming.

According to the EPA, methane accounted for more than 10 percent of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from human activities as recently as 2017. Nearly a third of those emissions were generated by the natural gas and petroleum industry.

"What they're tackling is whether methane can lawfully be a regulatory pollutant," Erik Milito, vice president of upstream and industry operations for the American Petroleum Institute, said in an interview. "We have a strong consensus that federal agencies need to follow the letter of the law. They did not do that, and they are going back and correcting that."

Anne Idsal, assistant administrator of the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, said the administration is confident that methane emissions from oil and gas companies will continue to decline over time, even without the current regulations.

"Methane is a valuable resource," Idsal told reporters in a call Thursday. "There's every incentive for industry to minimize any type of fugitive methane emissions, capture it, use it and sell it down the road."

The agency estimates that the proposed changes, which will be subject to public comment for 60 days after they are published, would save the oil and natural gas industry \$17 million to \$19 million a year.

But several of the world's biggest fossil fuel companies, including Exxon, Shell and BP, have opposed the rollback and urged the Trump administration to keep the current standards in place. Collectively, these firms account for 11 percent of America's natural gas output.

In a statement Thursday, Shell U.S. President Gretchen Watkins reiterated the company's support for national limits on methane, noting that Shell has pledged to reduce its methane leaks from its global operations to less than 0.2 percent by 2025.

"We believe sound environmental policies are foundational to the vital role natural gas can play in the energy transition and have made clear our support of 2016 law to regulate methane from new and modified onshore sources," she said. "Despite the administration's proposal to no longer regulate methane, Shell's U.S. assets will continue to contribute to that global target."

The Wall Street Journal first reported news of the rollback.

Idsal said the agency will continue regulating volatile organic compounds, which are also released during oil and gas operations, rather than methane directly. Such limits could cut down on the amount of methane released in the process.

Milito noted that by 2023, 90 percent of oil and gas facilities will have to install technology curbing volatile organic compounds.

In September, the Interior Department eased requirements that oil and gas firms operating on federal and tribal land capture the release of methane.

Environmentalists threatened to fight the Trump administration's move in court.

Kassie Siegel, director of the Climate Law Institute at the Center for Biological Diversity, an advocacy group, called the proposal reckless, saying it shows "complete contempt for our climate." She said that even the Obama administration's efforts to limit methane emissions were modest, given the significant amount that escapes into the atmosphere each year.

"The Obama rule was like a Band-Aid on a gaping wound," Siegel said. "The Trump administration is so fanatical that they couldn't even live with the Band-Aid. They had to rip off the Band-Aid."

The Obama administration's push to impose the first limits on methane emissions from the oil and gas industry in 2016 came shortly after the EPA found that emissions were on an upswing at a time when booming U.S. shale oil and gas drilling had dramatically driven down the prices of domestic natural gas and global oil alike.

Ben Ratner, a senior director at the advocacy group Environmental Defense Fund, said in an interview that rolling back the regulations could reward bad actors in the industry. Given that many major players had embraced limits on methane, Ratner said, it made little sense for Trump officials to ease such restrictions.

"It's more of an ideological reaction to regulation of any climate pollutant by the federal government," he said.

Steven Mufson contributed to this report.

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